

1 inch = 400 feet

June 1, 2009

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 CONCORD SOI, ARE
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 DEVELOPMENT, INC.

Sources:
 Leominster DPW,
 Assessor's Office,
 MassGIS

- Legend**
- Study Area Boundary
- Parcels
- Zoning District**
- Resid - B
 - Resid - C
 - Bus - B
 - Comm
 - Ind
- Current Use**
- Single or Two Family
 - Multi-Family
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Institutional
 - Municipal
 - Parking Lot
 - Vacant

*City of Leominster MA
 Gateway Plus Grant*

Comb & Carriage/French Hill
 Zoning with Current Land Use

or multi-family structures in the Residence-B district must comply with Section 22-19.2.5 of the Zoning Ordinance. There are only two parcels that meet the minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet, and both are currently occupied (one residential and one commercial). Under the provisions of 22-19.2.5.2, only two units would be permitted on the residential lot and four on the commercial lot.

Likewise, new construction in the Residence-C district must comply with Section 22-20.2, which requires a minimum lot size of 13,000 sf for a two family, 18,000 sf for a three family, etc. (adding 5,000 sf for every additional unit), all of which are permitted by right in Section 22-26 (Table of Uses). Not including institutional, commercial, or the senior housing properties, there are 10 lots where a new two family structure could be constructed, and 6 additional lots where a new multi-family structure could be constructed with 3, 4, 5, or in once case, 18 units (off Wells Court). That parcel is currently vacant (and we understand is relatively wet), all others are occupied with residential structures.

This means that, within the two residential districts in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, there are nearly 450 parcels that are not large enough for the construction of a new residential building for two or more families. That's 95% of the residential parcels in these two districts. In the vast majority of cases where an existing building is torn down, the only infill that could take place would be a single family home. In some areas of the neighborhood that would make sense, but in other areas a two or three family structure would be more compatible with the existing uses.

Conversions of single family to multi-family structures in the Residence-B district are permitted as of right by the use table, and there is no requisite increase in lot size for the additional units, but the lot would have to be a conforming lot (minimum of 10,000 sf). Currently there are 126 parcels that do not meet this minimum lot size (see Figure 49, page 68). Of those, 69, or 55%, are at least 6,500 sf. These are currently occupied by 51 single family, 15 two family, 1 three family, and 1 six family structures. To encourage reinvestment in existing structures, we recommend allowing structures on lots that are at least 6,500 sf to get a building permit without need for a variance, special permit, or site plan approval for renovation projects when either no ad-

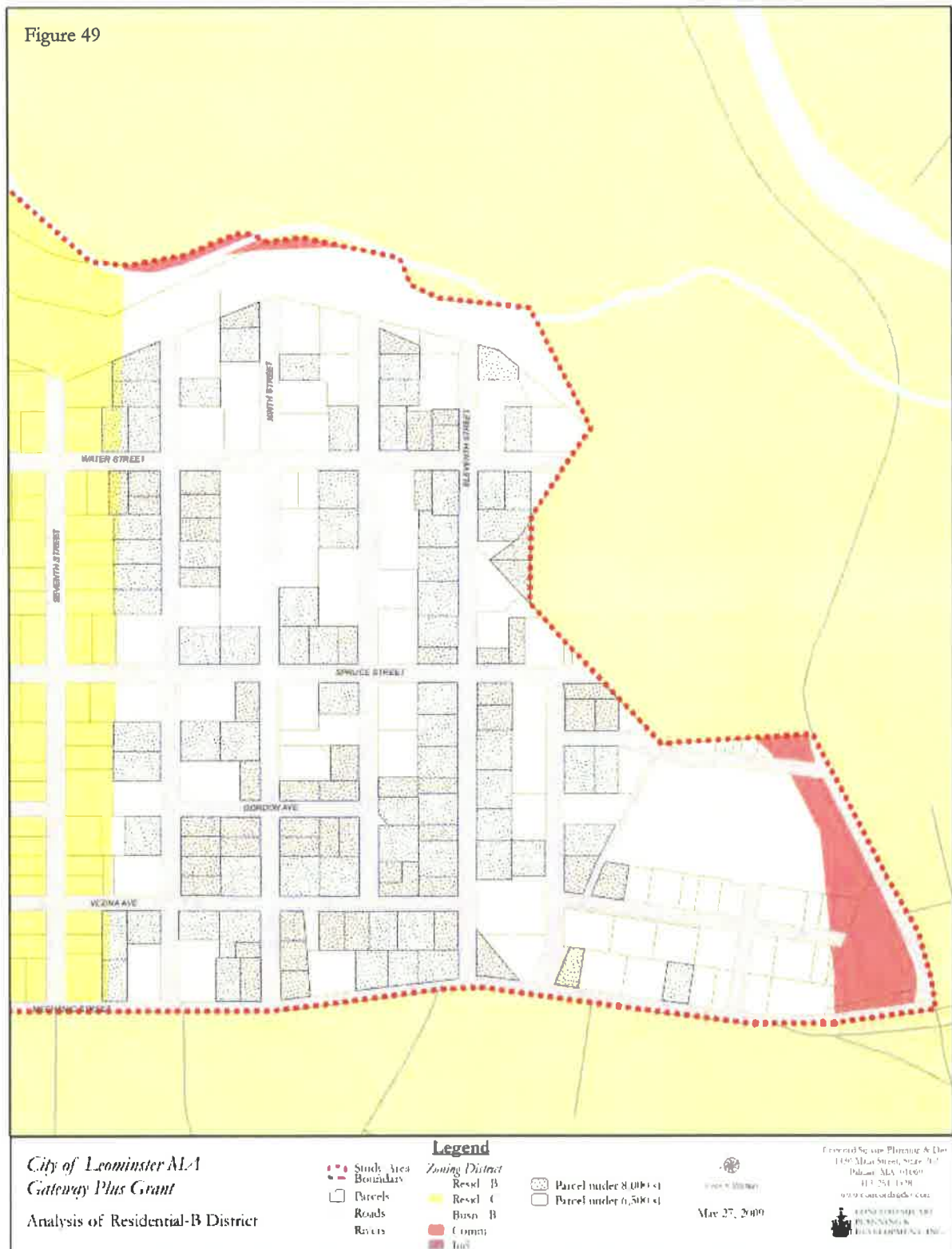
ditional dwelling units are to be added or conversion from a single family to a two family is proposed, provided there is off-street parking for at least 3 vehicles. This would benefit 51 parcels currently occupied by single family structures and 17 additional properties occupied by structures with two or more units.

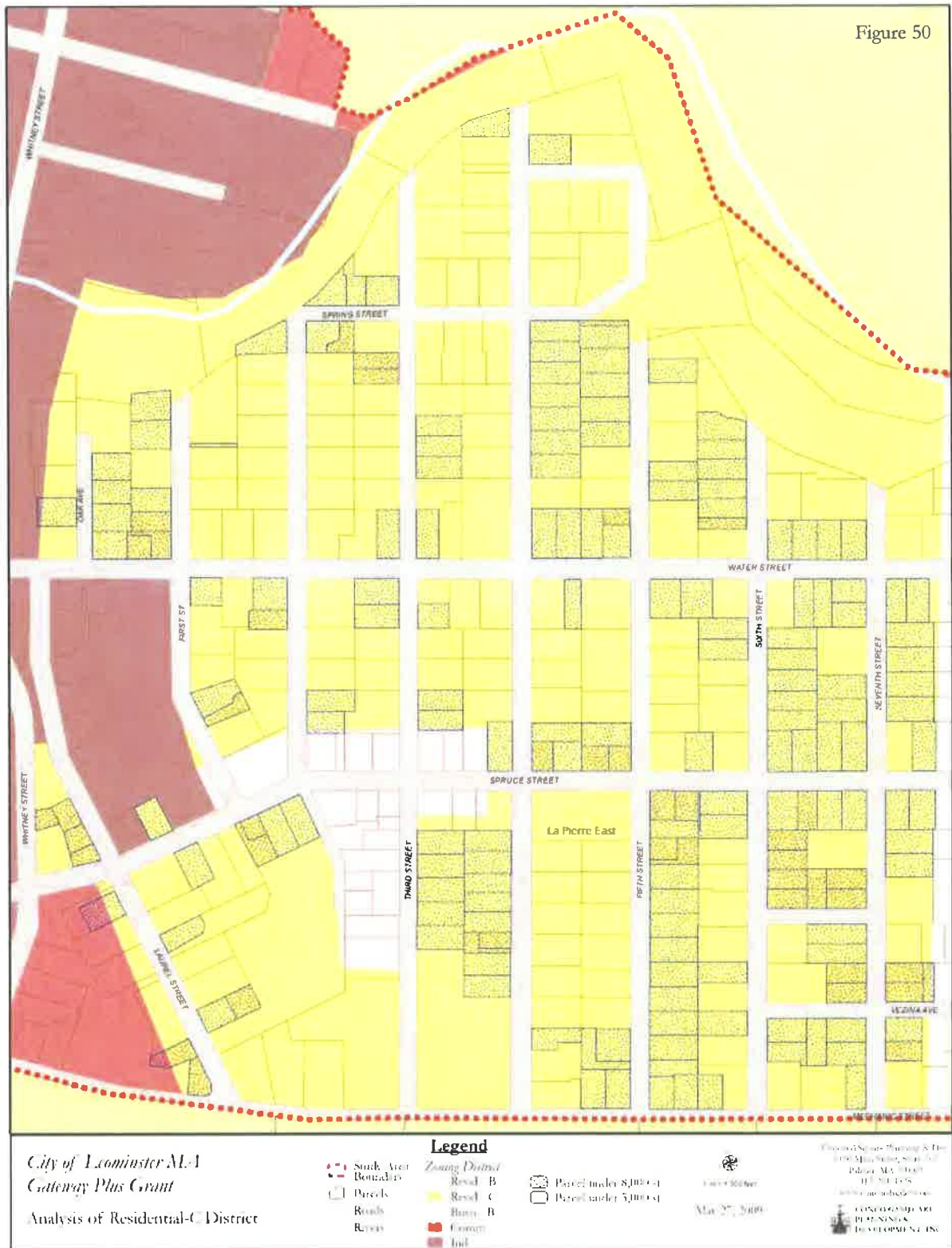
In the Residence-C district, conversions of single family to multi-family are permitted as of right, again with no increase in lot size for additional units, provided the lot meets the minimum lot size of 8,000 sf. There are 191 parcels under 8,000 sf (see Figure 50). Of those, 147, or 77%, are at least 5,000 sf; they are currently occupied by 41 single family, 43 two family, and 64 multi-family structures. Concord Square recommends allowing structures on lots that are at least 5,000 sf (blue stipple in Figure 50, page 69) to get a building permit without need for a variance, special permit, or site plan approval for renovation projects when either no additional dwelling units are to be added or conversion to add dwelling units up to a maximum of three per parcel, provided there is off-street parking for at least five vehicles. This would benefit 84 parcels currently occupied by single or two family structures without creating unreasonable impacts on the neighborhood.

An analysis was also made for the two commercial districts, where there are 31 residential properties (see Figure 51, page 70). An analysis of the industrial district will be covered later on in the discussion of the proposed zoning amendments for the Downtown Overlay District. Of these 31 properties, 21 are undersized (less than 8,000 square feet) and 7 of those are less than 5,000 square feet. Most of these are in the Business-B district located at the intersection of Spruce Street and Third Street, and includes three of the four corner lots as well as most of the lots along the west side of Third Street (within the BB district). As with the previous discussions on the residential districts, this undersize issue can inhibit reinvestment in property based on the more complex permitting required, which in many cases would be impossible to obtain (since size issues are common in the area, variance applications would not meet the requirements set forth in MGL Ch. 40A Section 10). Especially given the desire to improve this area of the neighborhood and encourage mixed uses with retail on the ground floor, Concord Square recommends that the zoning ordinance be amended to



Figure 49





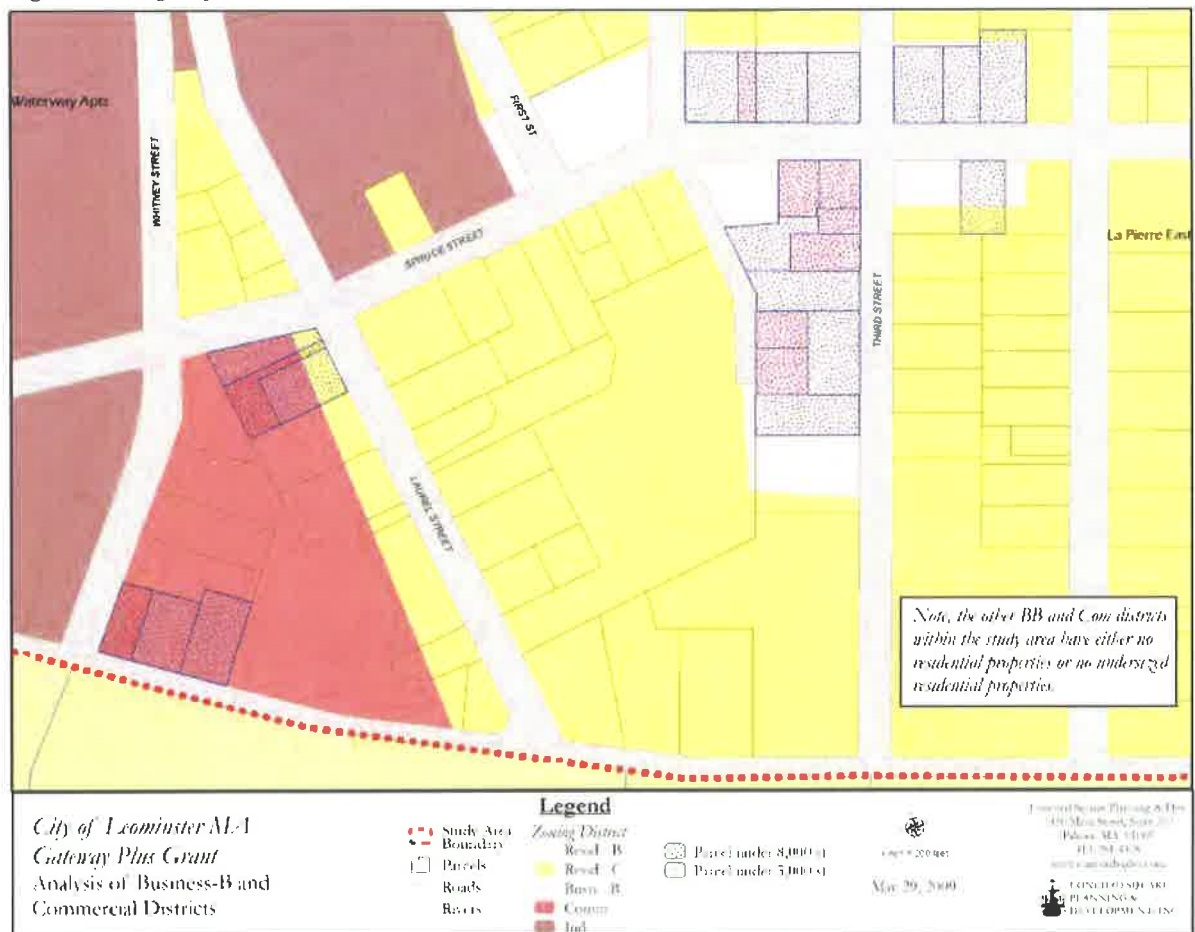
allow renovations or reconstruction on lots that are at least 5,000 square feet without need for a special permit, variance, or site plan approval.

Concord Square also found a potential problem regarding two-family/duplex structures. The issue is that the Definitions in Section 22-4 leave out structures that are two family dwellings but are configured with one unit above the other. A “duplex house” as defined is only one with a single common wall from roof to foundation, and an “apartment/multi-family dwelling” is for three or more units. This can cause confusion for those who have two family buildings that are not duplex houses. In addition, it presents a problem with the proposed Downtown Overlay District where the language only refers to “duplex house” and not to “two family” structures. Concord Square has found there are 154 properties that are two family buildings, all or most

of which do not fit the definition of duplex house (see Figure 52, page 71).

Concord Square recommends that Leominster add a new definition for “two family house” that states that any residential structure with two units that does not meet the definition of a duplex house is a two family house. In addition, language could be added to “duplex house” to reference that new definition, providing further clarification. Concord Square also recommends that the proposed Downtown Overlay District regulations be modified to permit two family houses, to avoid creating 11 nonconforming lots. An alternative to these suggestions would be to amend the existing definition of duplex house to include all structures with two units, regardless of configuration.

Figure 51: Analysis of Business-B and Commercial Districts.



4.2 Proposed Zoning Amendments

Concord Square also reviewed the proposed zoning amendments to examine their impact on the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. Figure 53 (page 72) shows the current zoning with the two proposed overlay districts within the study area that are presently under discussion in Leominster. These include the Downtown Overlay District (DOD) and Mechanic Street Overlay District (MSOD).

The proposed Downtown Overlay District is intended to encourage a mix of commercial, office, residential, and institutional uses in a walkable environment that blends the various uses in a cohesive manner. For the non-residential properties in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood portion of the DOD (see Figure 54, page 73), there is no doubt that the proposed district is beneficial since it provides more opportunities for property owners than currently exists. However, Concord Square has identified some issues for residential properties that should be addressed to

ensure those property owners are not adversely impacted by the proposed regulations.

There are 53 residential parcels (current use, not zoning) in the proposed DOD (Figure 54, crosshatched parcels). Seven of those parcels have underlying zoning of Residence-C and therefore are compliant with the use regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Thirty two (60%) of the 53 parcels are undersized – smaller than required by the zoning, which is 8,000 square feet in the RC district and, per Section 22-27.8 is 8,000 square feet in the Industrial district. Ten of those are under 5,000 square feet (19% of the 53 residential parcels). Figure 54 shows the parcels that are under 8,000 sf with blue stipple and those under 5,000 sf with yellow stipple. All but one of the undersized lots is occupied with a residential structure, ranging in size from single family to nine units, plus one boarding house with 14 rooms. There are a total of 99 units in these 31 structures.

Figure 52: Two Family Properties

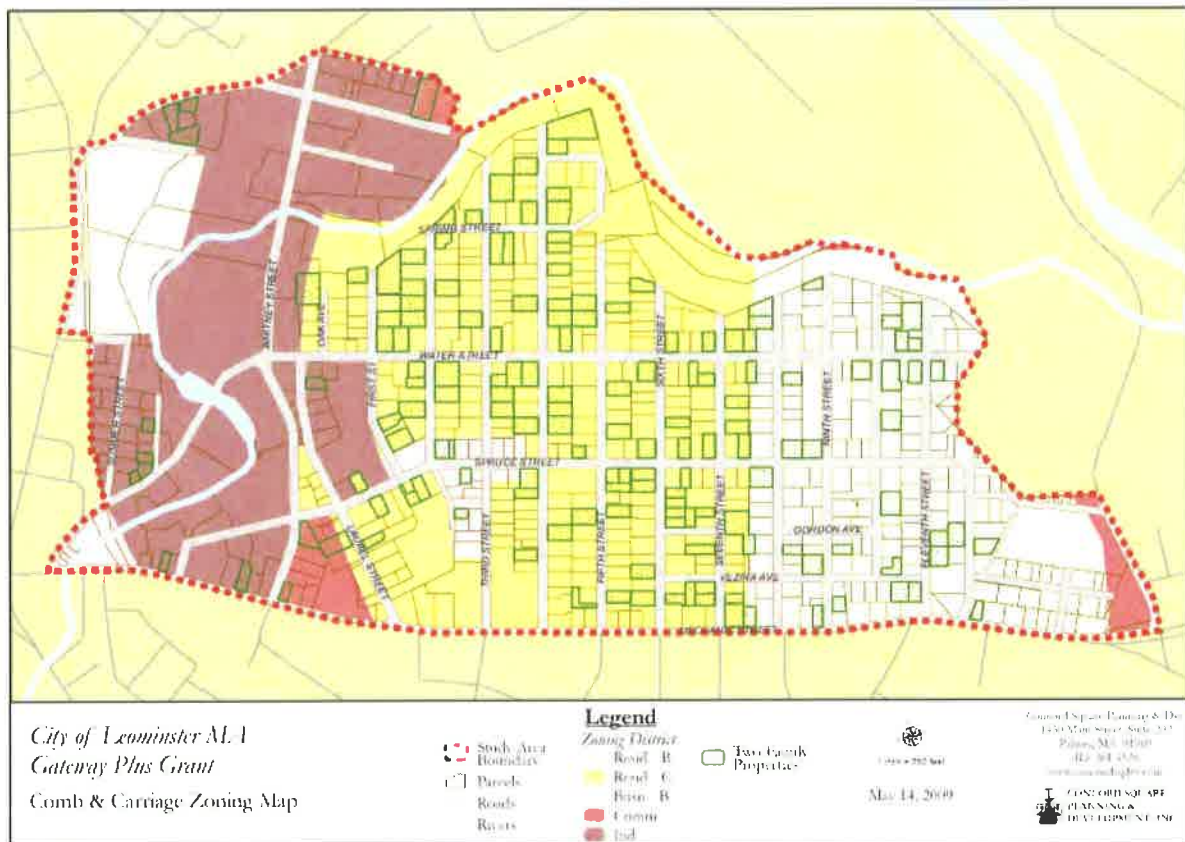
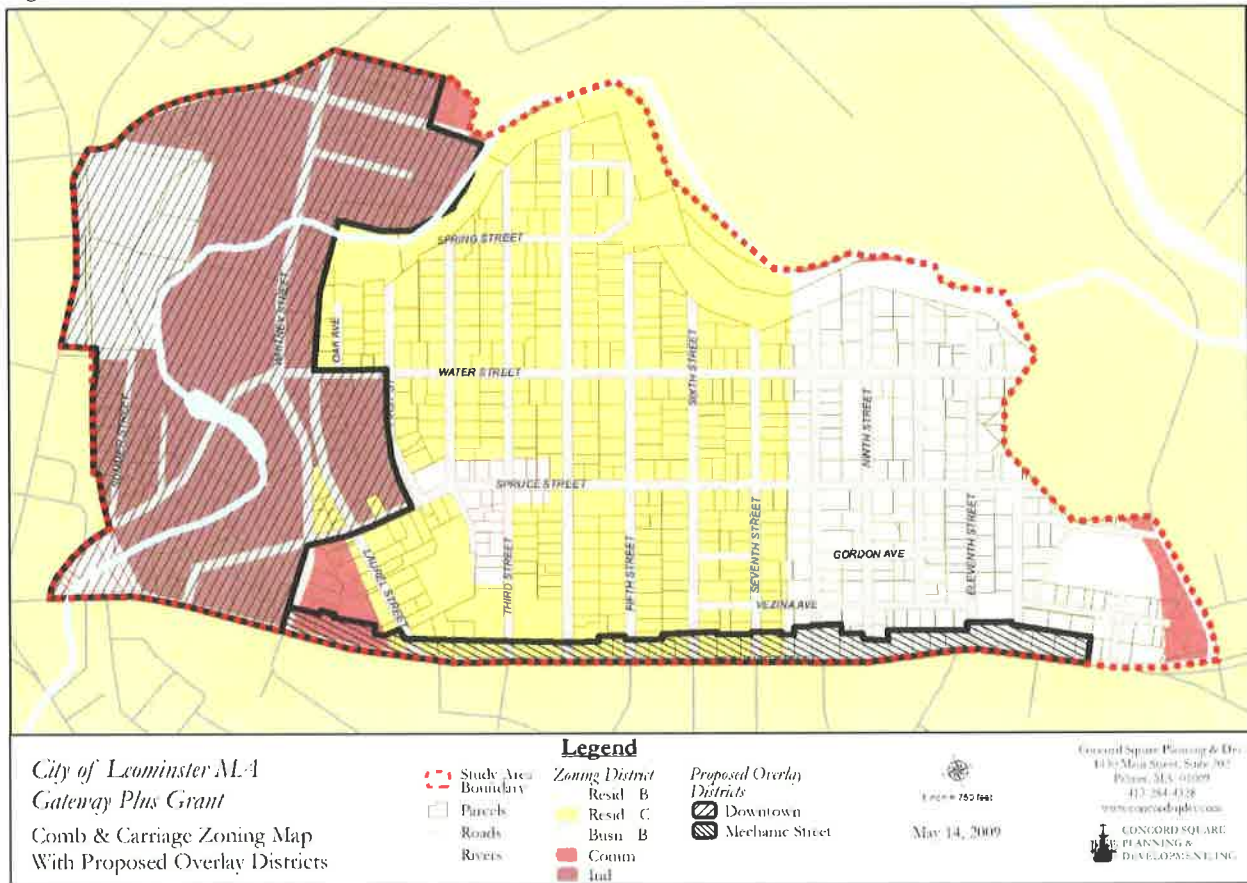


Figure 53



The proposed DOD does not address dimensional standards; the underlying zoning requirements must be met. This is where there is an issue—as just discussed, there are a substantial number of residential properties that do not meet the minimum lot size and therefore will have disincentives for improvements due to the need for variances or special permits. Concord Square recommends that the proposed DOD be modified to include provisions to allow properties currently used for residential purposes to be improved without need for a variance or special permit provided the lot is at least 5,000 square feet in size, with 50 feet of frontage and 8 foot setbacks for the side and rear yards. This will provide the opportunity for 22 properties to be improved under the DOD provisions, including the addition of non-residential uses to the extent that parking requirements can be met, without need for additional permits stemming from the fact they are undersized.

In relation to the issues raised earlier on the under-

sized residential parcels in the Commercial district between Whitney and Laurel Streets, another suggestion to consider is the extension of the Downtown Overlay District to include this small commercially zoned area. This would address the recommendation to add language to the ordinance regarding allowing parcels of at least 5,000 square feet to be rehabilitated without need for additional permits (beyond the building permit).

The Mechanic Street Overlay District is also within the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, as seen in Figure 53. Figure 55 provides a closer view of this district; the upper map is the western portion and the lower map is the eastern portion. Note that the district is also on the south side of Mechanic Street; only the portion within the study area is shown on these maps. There are three underlying zoning districts: Commercial, Residence-B, and Residence-C. The current wording of these proposed regulations is contradictory to the intent—Section 3B states that when the provisions



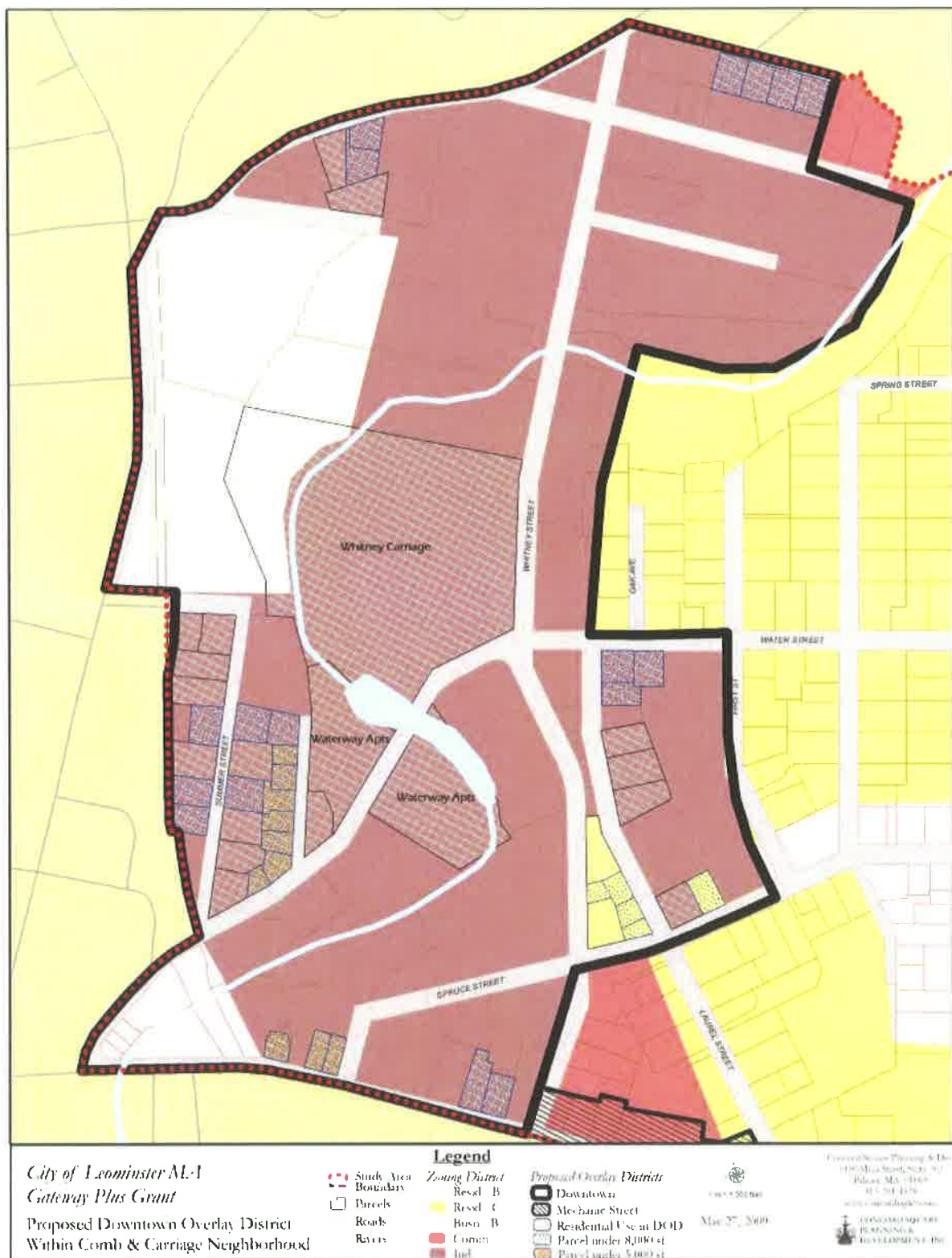
Figure 54: *Analysis of Downtown Overlay District*

Figure 55: *Analysis of Mechanic Street Overlay District*

of the underlying zoning conflict with those of the MSOD, the MSOD “shall govern”. Concord Square understands this is not the intent and that wording will be modified prior to adoption.

There are 38 parcels in the neighborhood that fall within the proposed MSOD, 31 are residential. Of those, 9 are single family, 5 are two family (but not necessarily duplex houses), and 17 are multi-family. Under the proposed overlay district, multi-family, including conversion of existing single family structures to multi-family, is not permitted. Duplex houses are permitted, thus the point raised previously regarding the definitions of duplex house and two family house becomes important. Single family is permitted in the proposed overlay district. The underlying zoning permits single, two, and multi-family in both the RB and RC districts but not in the Commercial district. Conversion of single family to

two or multi-family is also permitted in the RB and RC districts but not in the Commercial district. This contradiction regarding whether multi-family is permitted or not within the MSOD should be addressed prior to adoption. As drafted, only 9 parcels of the 38 in the MSOD would be in compliance with the overlay district use regulations, with a single family house.

The dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district still apply in the MSOD. Twenty parcels are smaller than the minimum lot sizes, or 63% of the 32 residential parcels. All of those property owners would face the need for a variance to the lot size requirements for redevelopment projects under Section 8 of the proposed regulations—obviously a significant deterrent to the revitalization of the corridor. Concord Square recommends that the MSOD be revised to permit as of right the redevelopment or renovation of exist-



ing structures on lots which are a minimum of 5,000 square feet, regardless of what the underlying district normally requires. This would eliminate a substantial disincentive to redevelopment or renovation.

4.3 Recommendations

To summarize, Concord Square has examined the existing and proposed zoning with an eye toward encouraging the property owners in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood to reinvest in their properties as the neighborhood continues to experience positive change. Several significant issues have been raised, summarized as the following recommendations:

- ❖ Amend the Residence-B district to permit as of right the renovation of existing structures which increase the size of the structure or which convert a single family structure to a two family structure, provided the parcel is a minimum of 6,500 square feet, and off-street parking is provided for three vehicles in the case of any conversion of single family to two family.
- ❖ Amend the Residence-C district to permit as of right the renovation of existing structures which increase the size of the structure or which convert a single family or two family structure to a two or three family structure, provided the parcel is a minimum of 5,000 square feet, and off-street parking is provided for three vehicles in the case of any conversion of single family to two family or for five vehicles in the case of a conversion to three family.
- ❖ Amend the Business-B district, and possibly the Commercial district as well (see recommendation below), to permit as of right the renovation, rehabilitation, or redevelopment of any property with residential use or mixed use that is a minimum of 5,000 square feet.
- ❖ Amend the definition of “duplex house” and/or add a definition for “two family house” to clarify what a structure with two dwelling units that are configured one above the other is.
- ❖ Modify the proposed Downtown Overlay District to permit as of right the development or redevelopment of any lot located within the DOD (or possibly lots within the Comb & Carriage portion of the DOD) provided they are at least 5,000 square feet, have 50 feet of frontage, and have 8 foot side and rear setbacks.
- ❖ Consider expanding the Downtown Overlay District to include the area between Whitney Street and Laurel Street which is zoned Commercial.
- ❖ Modify the proposed Mechanic Street Overlay District to eliminate the contradiction in Section 3B regarding the MSOD regulations “shall govern”.
- ❖ Modify the MSOD to permit as of right development or redevelopment of any lot located within the MSOD (or possibly lots within the Comb & Carriage portion of the MSOD) provided they are at least 5,000 square feet.





5 FUNDING OPTIONS

5.1 Introduction & Overview

A central element of this report is a series of recommended improvements to the public infrastructure within the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. These recommendations are presented in three action plans, setting out an overall conceptual plan for improvements including preliminary cost estimates and prioritization of recommended improvements. This work is conceptual in nature, and is intended as a foundation for subsequent work to be completed by the City of Leominster and its agents as it proceeds to plan implementation.

Concord Square has undertaken a thorough analysis of various infrastructure financing options that may be available to support implementation of elements of the recommended infrastructure improvements. This analysis takes into account a wide range of infrastructure financing options including State and, to a lesser extent, Federal grants, State infrastructure financing mechanisms, and local options to generate and manage dedicated revenues for infrastructure improvements. However, extensive analysis has only been completed relative to those programs that were preliminarily determined to have potential applicability to the project objectives in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. Financing options not deemed relevant to the recommendations in this report are referred to only briefly, or not at all.

5.2 Summary of Recommended Infrastructure Improvements

The public improvements recommended to assist in the stabilization and enhancement of the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood are included in Section 3 of this report. The nature of the recommended improvements is summarized as follows:

- ❖ Sidewalks
 - ♦ New construction w/curbing
 - ♦ Major repairs w/curbing
 - ♦ Minor repairs w/curbing
 - ♦ New curbing on existing sidewalks
- ❖ Monoosnoc Brook Greenway, including:
 - ♦ Two pedestrian bridges (at Williams, Spring Streets)
 - ♦ Resurface portions of pathway
 - ♦ Improved connections (at Third and Sixth)
 - ♦ New Crosswalks

The steps necessary to implement the recommended improvements will include, generally:

- ❖ Securing funding to advance concept design
- ❖ Advancing concept recommendations to specific project design
- ❖ Securing funding for construction of specific improvements
- ❖ Construction of improvements

This section is intended to assist the City in advancing these steps.

5.3 Infrastructure Financing Options

Our research suggests five basic methods of municipal infrastructure financing:

- ❖ Public grants
- ❖ Allocation of local funding
- ❖ Spending supported by fees/contributions from users/beneficiaries
- ❖ Debt supported by future incremental revenues in identified district(s)
- ❖ General Obligation Bonds

This introductory section is intended to frame the consideration of which types of programs may be most applicable in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. Appendix A of this report includes detailed information about specific programs of greatest relevance.



A brief discussion of each of the financing methods listed above follows:

- ❖ **Public grants:** A range of State and Federal grants exist to support infrastructure improvements. Some are available for project design, although more typically such grants are only available for construction. Often, grants require a local match which may be financial or in-kind services depending on the grant requirements. Appendix A includes a detailed listing of grants that may be applicable in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood including current information, as available, regarding funding amounts available, maximum grant award, matching requirements, application deadlines, contact information for program administrators, and additional notes.
- ❖ **Allocation of Local Funding:** Within any given fiscal year, the City of Leominster has a limited amount of discretionary funding for which the recommended infrastructure improvements may be eligible, including funding provided through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and Ch. 90 allotments from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD). The availability of funding varies from year to year and its use is subject to local policy priorities and applicable program requirements.
- ❖ **Spending supported by fees/contributions from users/beneficiaries:** The Commonwealth has created, by statute, several mechanisms for infrastructure financing to be funded through fees or contributions from end users/beneficiaries of public improvements. These mechanisms range from Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that are adopted upon consent of those landowners who would bear the cost (and benefit) of such a policy to betterments or special assessments that may be imposed upon order of the local government. Both approaches have their benefits and drawbacks, and Appendix A will explore in some detail which strategy may be beneficial in Leominster.

- ❖ **Debt supported by future incremental revenues in identified district(s):** Since 2003 the Commonwealth has authorized, by statute, two mechanisms for municipal infrastructure financing based on the issuance of public debt to be paid down with future incremental revenues generated within one or more designated districts. District Improvement Financing (DIF) authorizes the allocation of future local revenues (property tax, excise tax) in a district to pay debt service on public borrowing for improvements that allow growth to take place that would not occur in the absence of such improvements.¹ The Infrastructure Investment Incentive program (I-Cubed), which is limited by statute to a total of five districts statewide, and which includes a minimum borrowing amount of \$10M, has a similar structure to DIF except that the borrowing it authorizes would be paid down with incremental – or “net new” – State revenues (sales tax, income tax).²
- ❖ **General Obligation Bonds:** The City of Leominster has the option to issue new public bonds to invest in capital improvements such as those recommended for the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood.

The information above is intended to provide a summary of traditional infrastructure financing mechanisms. Appendix A provides additional detail regarding specific infrastructure financing resources.

5.4 Recommended Financing Strategies

It is well understood that the recommendations for public infrastructure improvements in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood must be considered in the context of the City's other capital improvement needs, and that the sum total of such needs will far outstrip available resources. However, such improvements represent a long-term investment in the City, and have the potential to increase property values and tax revenues, as discussed in Section 3.6. Concord Square recommends the action plans be implemented over the course of several years. Despite the challeng-

¹ Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 40Q; and 402 CMR 3.00.

² St. 2006, c.293 §§ 5-12, as amended by St. 2008, c.129; and 801 CMR 51.00.



ing economic climate, several actions are recommended as positive steps to capitalize on the strengths and proactively resolve the challenges in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood.

The following actions are recommended to advance the planning work done to date toward project implementation.

- ❖ **Maintain Grants Administrator position.** In order to maximize the City of Leominster's prospects of receiving grant funding in what will continue to be a competitive environment, Concord Square recommends maintaining the full time Grants Administrator position under the Mayor to monitor grant deadlines and lead or coordinate the preparation of grant applications. Each of the grant programs listed in Appendix A may potentially be funding sources for projects in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, and several programs have announced application deadlines for the next grant round (see table on page A3). The ability to be responsive to such time-sensitive funding opportunities is critical to maximizing the City's prospects for funding. The City is urged to pursue initial funding to advance the conceptual recommendations to engineered design, at which point the resulting projects would be eligible for more significant construction funding.
- ❖ **Pursue gateway cities implementation funds.** A limited number of implementation grants are expected to be awarded on a competitive basis to Gateway Cities to support implementation of plans resulting from the Gateway Plus Action Grants. The City of Leominster should make every effort to receive one of the implementation grants to advance the recommendations in this report. In addition to pursuing the grant through the competitive selection process, likely to be managed by DHCD, we recommend widely circulating this report and its recommendations to interested parties including residents, merchants, institutional partners and local and state elected officials. Broad advocacy for the award of such implementation funds, building on the comprehensive planning approach underlying this report, can be expected to positively affect the likelihood of a funding award.

- ❖ **Adopt a Capital Improvement Plan.** Capital improvement spending in Leominster has not traditionally been guided by a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There are a number of reasons for this. First, staffing constraints and limited resources relative to the demand for improvements have dictated that what resources are available have generally been put toward short-term priorities rather than long-term planning. Second, because infrastructure financing is typically funded by either local allocations (such as Ch. 90 funds) or grants, the funding decisions have sometimes been guided by the parameters associated with the funding source.

Concord Square recommends that the City prepare and periodically update a CIP. For efficiency, we suggest that the initial plan need not incorporate greater detail than what is currently available regarding programmed infrastructure projects. Rather, we believe it would be beneficial to prepare a more generalized plan identifying various neighborhoods within the City; outlining in conceptual terms the nature of the needed improvements; and incorporating some direction regarding the policy objectives that would objectively prioritize one neighborhood or project over another. It can be reasonably expected that the documented need for capital improvements will significantly outstrip the funding available for such improvements for the foreseeable future. Therefore, we believe a general statement of policy that assists decision-makers' efforts to objectively prioritize the use of limited funds could be useful in guiding each year's spending decisions. We also believe that such a plan, if implemented and updated on an ongoing basis, would assist the City both in attracting public spending grants in the future, as well as assisting the City's efforts to attract private economic investment that may be coordinated with public improvements.

- ❖ **General Obligation Bond to finance infrastructure improvements.** Table 7 (page 61) of this report presents a funding proposal which involves cost sharing between the City and the State or other sources. The assumption, borne out by the analysis presented in Table 6 (page 59) of that section, is that the City can afford to carry a bond



debt of \$94,500 per year for 25 years. With a \$1.5 million bond issue for 25 years, with a 3.95% interest and 2.35% amortization, the annual debt service would be \$94,500. Subtracting this from the increase in property taxes of \$198,000 projected to result from the infrastructure investments, the result would provide a net benefit to the City of an estimated \$100,000 per year for the 25 year life of the bond. The increase in property tax revenues is unlikely to occur without the improvements to the neighborhood, therefore it cannot be assumed that this revenue would “be there anyway”. Although the decision to issue new debt for capital improvements is inherently challenging, we suggest that this cost/benefit analysis justifies an investment in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood.

- ❖ **Consideration of betterments for sidewalk/streetscape improvements.** If the imposition of betterments as a financing approach, further detailed in Appendix A, receives public support, it is recommended as an innovative way to generate new revenues for public improvements in which those landowners financing the improvements would receive a direct benefit from the funding they contribute. Given the DPW’s ability to keep costs low by providing labor, it is suggested that this could be a cost effective strategy to realize improvements on the ground in the near term.
- ❖ **Seek regional prioritization of Comb & Carriage/French Hill improvements.** Federal and State funding sources will rely heavily on the recommendations in State and Regional planning documents relative to transportation planning and infrastructure spending. In order to be competitive for limited available funding, Leominster must continue to advocate for its priorities within the STIP planning process, as well as the Massachusetts EOT Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- ❖ **Continue to file annual paperwork for *Commonwealth Capital* program.** As more and more municipalities aggressively pursue public grants to support infrastructure improvements, it is recommended that the City of Leominster continue

its work to date to maintain a strong *Commonwealth Capital* score to differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

- ❖ **Establish a gift account pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 44 Sec. 53A.** Such an account would provide a mechanism to hold and manage funds contributed for implementation of public improvements in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. In order to be effective, this would need to be supplemented by periodic solicitations of contributions from private parties such as the Whitney Field Mall, particularly concurrent with anticipated public investments. Such an account may also provide fund for voluntary donation for off-site improvements as mitigation within the local permitting process for future development in the neighborhood. In the event that such an account is established, its sources and uses of funds could be periodically publicized to demonstrate progress toward the recommended improvements and generate and sustain public support for the neighborhood.



6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following summarizes the outreach and community engagement effort performed by John Ryan, Principal of Development Cycles, Amherst, MA and by the Twin Cities Community Development Corporation of Fitchburg, MA (the community engagement consultants) as part of the Leominster Gateway Plus Grant. The community engagement effort consisted of three major activities: engaging key community organizations as partners in the effort; engaging the neighborhood and the community in public discussions; and engaging individuals through telephone and door-to-door conversations.

6.1 Engaging Partner Organizations

The community engagement consultants met early in the process with city officials, neighborhood social service agencies, neighborhood religious organizations, and the East End Neighborhood Association to solicit their active participation in the Gateway planning process as well as their capacity to link the planning effort to their constituents (See Appendix B for a list of participants in the Gateway Plus planning process). Key activities in this effort included:

- ❖ **City Officials:** The consultants met twice with Leominster's Director of Planning and Community Service Director to discuss goals, participation strategies, key participants, and previous planning efforts in the Comb & Carriage/ French Hill neighborhood. The consultants met twice with Mayor Dean Mazzarella to solicit his input, get suggestions on individuals to engage in the process, and to tour the Comb & Carriage neighborhood where he grew up and lives. The consultants also met with the City council to brief them on the study's progress and to solicit their suggestions for areas of focus and potential neighborhood participants. Over the course of the study, the consultants worked closely with Ward Councilor Wayne Nichols to arrange meetings, discuss options, and further community participation.
- ❖ **Social Service and Religious Organizations:** From the outset, the consulting team worked closely with the Spanish American Center to co-

ordinate outreach to Spanish speaking residents in the neighborhood. The SAC provided outreach assistance, collected comments and suggestions, and hosted the June 12th community discussion event. The consultants also met on several occasions with Casa de Restauracion, an evangelical church in the community with a strong interest in social issues. The church's ministers, Angel and Joan Morales participated actively in the planning efforts and hosted the initial community planning meeting. The consultants also met on at least two occasions with Jackie Hagger of Catholic Charities, the pastor and key parishioners of Saint Celia's Catholic Church, and Arthur Huesser of the Montachusett Interfaith Network. Each of these institutions is located in the neighborhood. The consultants also met with Ginny White, a community activist whose thrift shop serves as an essential lifeline to some of the poorest neighborhood residents.

- ❖ **East End Neighborhood Association:** The consultants spoke on numerous occasion with residents affiliated with a semi-active neighborhood association that has over the years contributed an important voice to issues in the neighborhood. EENA participation in the first two community meetings proved invaluable to the process. The consultants held an additional meeting with the EENA to discuss the proposed reuse of the Whitney Building at 142 Water Street.





6.2 Outreach Efforts

The community engagement consultants conducted the following outreach efforts to ensure neighborhood participation in this planning initiative (See Appendix C for examples of publicity surrounding the process):

Meetings with Key Organizations: The consultants' outreach strategy began with an appeal to the above-listed organizations to help reach individual residents as they interacted with neighborhood organizations. Each of the organizations cooperated fully by contacting their clients, collecting information, and posting and passing out flyers informing residents of the community meetings.

- ❖ **Publicity:** The consultants prepared and followed up with staff reporters for publication of press releases notifying residents of the April, June and August community meetings in the Worcester Telegram, Fitchburg Sentinel & Enterprise, and the Leominster Champion.
- ❖ **Door Knocking:** five members of the TCCDC and one volunteer from the Spanish American Center spent seven hours knocking on doors in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood on April 14th and 22nd soliciting opinions on the needs of the neighborhood and inviting residents to come to the April 29th community meeting.
- ❖ **Leafleting:** The consultants prepared invitations to the April 29th community meeting in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese and requested permission in person to post these notices in every retail business in the neighborhood. The consul-

tants also provided copies of the leaflet to each of the supporting community organizations to distribute to their clientele.

- ❖ **Other:** The consultants arranged for, in some cases prepared, and publicized the availability of both food and childcare at each of the community meetings held.

6.3 Community Participation

The combined outreach efforts resulted in the following levels of neighborhood participation in the planning effort:

- ❖ **Community Meetings:** The April 29th community meeting brought together 45 participants to discuss a common revitalization vision for the neighborhood; the June 13th second community meeting and picnic was attended by 23 neighborhood residents; and the third community meeting was held on August 19 to review the final findings and recommendations of this report. A neighborhood meeting held on May 7th to discuss the redevelopment plan for 142 Water Street involved 25 participants.
- ❖ **Individual Participation:** In addition, the consultants held individual face-to-face discussions with 26 neighborhood residents as part of the door-knocking effort on April 14th and 22nd. See Appendix E for a summary of these interviews.

6.4 Key Community Contributions

The participation of neighborhood residents drove the process in terms of identifying particular neighborhood concerns, suggesting potential solutions, and provided essential feedback on potential actions offered by the professionals (See Appendix D for notes from the three community meetings).

- ❖ **Key Neighborhood Concerns:** Neighborhood identification of concerns that helped shape the revitalization plan included a primary focus on road and sidewalk infrastructure improvements; parking; and connections to the large retail shopping Mall at Whitney Field across the Monoosnoc Brook from the neighborhood. Neighborhood input also focused the plan's effort regarding rede-



velopment at 142 Water Street and on the rehabilitation of a number of foreclosed properties that serve as detriments to the community. These issues were seen as important foundational issues to support a desirable neighborhood to both prospective renters and homeowners.

- ❖ **Actions Suggested:** Neighborhood participants offered a range of helpful ideas to the planning process. Among these, the location and priority of specific infrastructure improvements.
- ❖ **Response to Potential Actions:** Participants provided their strongest positive feedback to those action items that improved roads and sidewalks, and addressed the relatively few distressed or abandoned residential properties in the neighborhood. Participants brought a realistic financial understanding of the City's limited potential to support some of the actions proposed by the professional team. With respect to road and sidewalk improvements, their appreciation for the limits on funding focused them on the priority locations identified in the plan. Similarly, although neighborhood residents expressed support for the development of the Monoosnoc Brook Greenway plan, they were looking primarily at local volunteer efforts and state or federal funding support to drive the implementation. Participants expressed doubts about the capacity of wider sidewalks and pedestrian connections to break residents reliance on the car to meet their commercial, social and recreational needs.



APPENDIX A

Specific Infrastructure Financing Resources

This appendix provides additional detail regarding each of the five municipal infrastructure financing mechanisms outlined in Sec. 5.3.

1. Public Grants

State Grants

Applying for and receiving State or Federal grants to support local infrastructure investments is a primary strategy for municipalities pursuing public improvements. This section provides a brief overview of the anticipated climate for such public financing resources in Massachusetts, followed by a breakdown of specific grant opportunities presently available and potentially applicable in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood.

The Commonwealth's capital budget for the period FY04-08 shows declining allocations to transportation spending, the most likely source for funds relevant to the Leominster plan, in each of the five fiscal years (from \$1.458B in FY04 to \$1.109B in FY08).¹ Further, reduced access to capital and increased borrowing costs have been a consequence of the ongoing changes in the capital markets and contraction of the world-wide credit markets. However, despite this challenging economic climate the Executive Office for Administration & Finance in early 2009 projected increased transportation funding from FY10 (est. at \$1.259B) through FY13 (\$2.107B).² These increases are projected to include increases in the State bond cap over the next four years, although this will be a smaller increase than had been previously planned.³

This additional spending statewide can be expected to provide new funding opportunities that may be applicable in Leominster. Naturally, given the nature of this funding climate and its impact on every municipality in the Commonwealth, it can also be anticipated that the competition for limited grant monies will be increasingly fierce in the coming years.

The table on page A3 provides a detailed listing of grants that may be applicable in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood including current information, as available, regarding funding amounts available, maximum grant award, matching requirements, application deadlines, contact information for program administrators etc.

In the course of preparing this table, Concord Square compiled information as available from various public agencies, and conducted follow-up interviews with a number of grant administrators with the intent to provide the most up-to-date information available. The enclosed table includes only those grants for which the recommended infrastructure improvements in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood (sidewalks, paths etc) are eligible uses of grant funding.

To ensure that grant awards are consistent with a broad framework for sustainable development, the Commonwealth has instituted a system of funding priority affecting certain grant funding included within the *Commonwealth Capital* program. Leominster has consistently filed the substantial paperwork needed to obtain a *Commonwealth Capital* rating and in FY09, Leominster received a score of 88 - well above the statewide median score of 72.⁴ For each

1 Commonwealth of Massachusetts FY2009-2013 Five-Year Capital Investment Plan, December 2008. Pg. 18.

2 Ibid. Pg. 24.

3 Ibid. 22.

4 www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov3terminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Key+Priorities&L2=Job+Creation+%26+Economic+Growth&L3=Clean+Energy+%26+Smart+Growth+Smart+Energy&L4=Commonwealth+Capital&sid=Agov3&b=terminalcontent&f=smart_growth_commonwealth_capital_scores_all&csid=Agov3



of the past five years (dating back to 2005, the first year of the program), the City of Leominster's score has been above the statewide median score for the same fiscal year.⁵

Of the grants listed on the attached table of programs potentially applicable to the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, those for which *Commonwealth Capital* scores are taken into account are the CDAG, PWED and PARC programs. In FY09, Leominster was awarded three grants included in the *Commonwealth Capital* program: one PARC grant and two New Clean Water SRF Loans.⁶

The City of Leominster is not a designated "Growth District" and will therefore not benefit from prioritized funding associated with that program. However, its designation as a Gateway City provided the funding necessary for this report, and will make Leominster eligible for additional funding for plan implementation that is expected to be made available to Gateway Cities on a competitive basis.

Leominster enjoys one significant advantage in its pursuit of funding for improvements to streets and sidewalks in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood (and elsewhere). Due to the capacity and experience of municipal DPW personnel, the City is able to provide in-house labor for various improvements including greenway, sidewalks and curbing. On prior such projects this use of local resources has resulted in significantly lower capital costs for implementation than would otherwise be possible, and these efficiencies have been taken into account in estimating the cost of recommended improvements. This efficiency can also be expected to enhance grant applications for State or Federal infrastructure assistance. In addition to enhancing the competitiveness of such grant applications, the DPW contribution of labor would satisfy the requirement for a local match included in several programs in which an in-kind contribution is eligible.

Federal Loans and Grants

A comprehensive evaluation of potential Federal funding opportunities was beyond the scope of this report. However, a couple of funding opportunities were identified, and are summarized below:

❖ HUD Sec. 108 Loan Guarantee Program⁷

- ◆ Loan guarantee provision of the CDBG program.
- ◆ Provides a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and large-scale physical development projects.
- ◆ A small portion of local CDBG funds may be leveraged to obtain federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects that can renew entire neighborhoods.
- ◆ Local governments borrowing funds guaranteed by Section 108 must pledge their current and future CDBG allocations to cover the loan amount as security for the loan.
- ◆ Eligible activities include (but are not limited to) construction, reconstruction, or installation of public facilities (including street, sidewalk, and other site improvements) provided that they either principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons, aid in the elimination or prevention of slums and blight, or meet urgent needs of the community.
- ◆ Entitlement communities may apply for up to five times the latest approved CDBG entitlement amount (minus any outstanding Sec. 108 commitments and/or principal balances).

⁵ www.mass.gov/Agov3/docs/smart_growth/cc09_slides.pdf

⁶ http://www.mass.gov/Agov3/docs/smart_growth/cc09_grants.pdf

⁷ <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108/#eligibleapplicants>



TABLE A1: LIST OF GRANT PROGRAMS

Grant		Description	Deadline	Funding	Max Award	Matching Req.	Commonwealth Capital?	Notes
		Information not available at this time. Check back on website.						
Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/ Contact: Cyrus Field @ (617) 573-1449 Cyrus.Field@state.ma.us		Stimulates economic development activities that will leverage private investment, create jobs, and help brighten neighborhoods. Eligible activities include installation, improvement, construction, alteration, and rehabilitation of publicly owned & managed properties such as building facades, streets, sidewalks, and water & sewer lines.						
Public Works and Economic Development (PWED) http://www.eos.state.ma.us/getfile.asp?file=content/EOGrantsPWED&cid=about Contact: Bill Palmer @ (617) 973-8070		Promotes economic development through improvement to streets, sidewalks, and other specified infrastructure. Eligible activities include design, construction, and/or reconstruction of existing and/or newly relocated streets, sidewalks, and related infrastructure.	Not yet determ. The 2009 deadline application was March.	14 mil. for program	1 mil. maximum	None	Yes	Project readiness a strong focus.
Recreational Trails Program http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/regional/grants.htm Contact: Amanda Lewis @ (413) 586-8706 x19 amanda.lewis@state.ma.us		Provides funding for a variety of trail protection, construction and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. This national program makes funds available to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses.	Oct. 1st, 2009	\$550k (FY08)	\$2,000 - \$50,000. Projects larger than \$50,000 considered for statewide proj.	80% match		Funded through FHWA
Transportation Enhancements Program http://www.eos.state.ma.us/getfile.asp?file=content/ehanceprogram&cid=about Contact: Jim Cope @ (617) 973-7043 james.cope@eos.state.ma.us		Program provides funding for non-traditional surface transportation projects. Projects are typically developed at the local level, reviewed by the region, and approved by the Executive Office of Transportation. Projects include but are not limited to: development of pedestrian/bicycle facilities, acquisition or improvement/rehabilitation of scenic or historic sites, and preservation of abandoned railway corridors.	Submit anytime. 4 steering committee meetings a year. Submit app. 4 weeks in advance for place on agenda.	NA	\$50,000 min for proj.	10%		
Urban and Community Forest Challenge Grants http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forest/urban/urban/grants.htm Contact: Eric Seaborn @ (617) 626-1468 eric.seaborn@state.ma.us		Provides grants to cities, towns and community groups for the development of long-term public involvement strategies for community trees and forests. These grants support projects that range from developing and adopting tree and forest ordinances and policies to securing a qualified Tree Warden. Broad coalitions of public, private and citizen groups and communities that have not previously been funded are favored for this program.	May 1 and Nov. 1 Intent to Apply Form must be received at least one month in advance of deadline, preferably two.	NA	\$1,000 to \$30,000. Applicants should apply for amount proj. requires.	Must be matched 50-50 by local funds or in-kind contributions.		Larger communities are likely to be more competitive for larger grant amounts.
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) www.mass.gov/dhcd/ Contact: Mark Siegenthaler @ (617) 573-1426 mark.siegenthaler@state.ma.us		Massachusetts CDBG Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. Assistance is provided to qualifying cities and towns for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents, or by revitalizing areas of slum or blight. Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to housing rehabilitation / development, infrastructure, & community/public facilities.	February of each year.	FY08 approx. \$34 mil.	\$750,000 - varies. May rise next year.	None		Building demolition funded.
CDBG-R (Recovery Act) www.mass.gov/dhcd/ Contact: Mark Siegenthaler @ (617) 573-1426 mark.siegenthaler@state.ma.us		Supplemental appropriations treated as substantial amendment to current FY09 One Year Action Plan. Must meet requirements of Title XII of Division A and Sec. 160Z of the Recovery Act.	NA	11 proj. w/total of \$6.2 mil. for infrastruct. pub. facil. & soc. services.	NA	None.		Through same vehicle as CDBG - but more strings attached.
Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) http://www.mass.gov/ees/EGS Contact: Melissa Cryan @ (617) 626-1171 melissa.cryan@state.ma.us		Part of the Smart Growth Technical Assistance Program. Any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents, or any city regardless of size, that has an authorized park/recreation commission and conservation commission, is eligible to participate in the program. Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program. Municipalities must have a current open space and recreation plan to apply, and the land must be open to the general public.	Varies - June/July, Grant workshop in May.	\$8M (FY09, est.)	\$50-\$500k	Reimbursement prog. requiring the applicant to raise, borrow, appropriate the tot.project cost, then be reimbursed portion of grant cost. Reimburse 52-70% of tot. project.	Yes	About 50% of applications are funded. 21-25 total grant awards. Communities can submit as many applications as they wish.
Gateway City Parks Program (part of Commonwealth Urban Parks) NA Contact: Kurt Gaertner @ (617) 626-1154 kurt.gaertner@state.ma.us		Part of the Smart Growth Technical Assistance Program. This program is intended to fund the creation and restoration of parks and recreational facilities in underserved urban neighborhoods.	NA	\$4 mil.	NA	NA	Yes	22 Gateway Cities are eligible, including Leminster. 10 projects currently underway or completed.

❖ Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grants

- ◆ Initial announcement of funding opportunity dated June 22, 2009.
- ◆ Funds in the amount of \$240,000,000 has been appropriated for FY 2009 and will remain available until expended. Generally, local match of at least 50% of project cost required, which may include in-kind contributions (although cash contributions are preferred).
- ◆ Grants include:
 - Public Works and Economic Development Facilities Program;
 - Planning Program;
 - Local Technical Assistance Program; and
 - Economic Adjustment Assistance Program
- ◆ Applications will be accepted on a continuing basis and processed as they are received.
- ◆ Grant-based investments under the Public Works, Planning, Local Technical Assistance, and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs that will promote comprehensive, entrepreneurial and innovation-based economic development efforts to enhance the competitiveness of regions, resulting in increased private investment and higher-skill, higher-wage jobs in areas experiencing substantial and persistent economic distress.
- ◆ Grant funding is prioritized for activities that will stimulate job growth and/or private investment. Additional research is needed to determine the degree to which this program may offer potential benefit to the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood.

Program Contact (MA): Matt Suchodolski
Philadelphia Regional Office
The Curtis Center-Suite 140 South
601 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Telephone: (215) 597-1242 Email: MSuchodolski@eda.doc.gov

Each of the federal grant programs above warrants additional investigation regarding its potential to advance the infrastructure recommendations included in this report.

❖ Federal Stimulus Funding

Federal stimulus funds resulting from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are available to support “shovel-ready” projects in Leominster. In order to be eligible for stimulus funds, projects must be determined to be “shovel ready.” Two lists of projects submitted for consideration by the City of Leominster are shown on page A7, and include a State-Reviewed, Shovel-Ready Project List as well as an Unreviewed List of Projects Submitted for State Consideration.

The list of Shovel-Ready projects in Leominster does not appear to include projects that advance the infrastructure recommendations in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, although due to the some-



what vague project descriptions available from the State this requires confirmation. The Unreviewed List does include one project of direct relevance to the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood (see below).

Project Title	Project Description	Tot.Fed. Act Request
Mechanic Street Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation of pavement edge failures, alligator cracking, rutting, and utility patching plus repair of sidewalks and related drainage	\$3,000,000

However, given that the number of projects in Massachusetts that were submitted for consideration for stimulus funding numbered approximately 8,000 and the 4,000 projects on the Reviewed List represent far more potential spending than is available, it is not considered likely that a project on the Unreviewed List will eventually receive stimulus funds.

Further, the first round of stimulus funds does not create opportunities for improvements in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill district that have not been previously identified due in part to the ineligibility of stimulus funding for “local road and sidewalk projects that are not on the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).”⁸

This provision of the Federal legislation has caused some frustration among local leaders in Massachusetts due in part to the time and effort required to advance a project to the stage where it is eligible for listing on the STIP.⁹ To mitigate this concern, the Massachusetts Municipal Task Force report relative to the ARRA recommends in part that “MPOs work closely with the EOT to institute an expedited process for TIP amendments, including both member and public review. The process should allow for TIP amendments to become effective immediately after bill passage and for the STIP to be amended immediately thereafter.”¹⁰

There are several Highway and Transit projects in Leominster included on the FFY 2008-2011 STIP, and therefore potentially eligible for stimulus funding (see Tables A2 and A3 on page A7).

Whether one or more of the listed STIP projects would advance the recommendations in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood should be discussed with Leominster DPW personnel.

A second round of stimulus funding may offer an opportunity for as-yet-unidentified projects in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood although the logistics of meeting the STIP requirement would be challenging, and perhaps infeasible. In order to be eligible for the second round of funding, projects must be ready for advertising by March 2, 2010.¹¹

It is our understanding that Leominster DPW personnel will advance the design for a traffic mitigation project at the intersection of Merriam and Lindell Avenues (outside the Comb & Carriage/French Hill study area) to

8 http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=stimterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Funding+and+Contracts&L2=Opportunities+for+Communities&sid=Fstim&b=terminalcontent&f=municipality_info&csid=Fstim

9 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mobilization for Federal Economic Recovery Infrastructure Investments – Task Force Reports. February 2009.

10 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mobilization for Federal Economic Recovery Infrastructure Investments – Task Force Reports. February 2009. Pg. 103.

11 http://www.eot.state.ma.us/downloads/stip/project_listings.pdf



Table A2: Leominster Highway projects included on the FFY 2008-2011 STIP

Funding	Location	ID#	Project	Total	Federal	Non-Federal	NFA Source	FFY	MPO	Dist.
Bridge-On	Leominster	600760	Mechanic St Br / Nashua River (L-8-3)	\$5,583,370	\$4,466,696	\$1,116,674	state	2008	Montachusett	3
CMAQ - AC	Fitchburg / Leominster	603331	Route 12 - Phases 1 & 2 (A/C) - improvements	\$2,978,000	\$2,382,400	\$595,600	state	2008	Montachusett	3
HPP	Fitchburg / Leominster	603331	Rte 12 - phse 1 & 2 - signals & improvements (TEA-21)	\$400,000	\$320,000	\$80,000	state	2008	Montachusett	3
CMAQ	Fitchburg / Leominster	603331	Route 12 - Phases 1 & 2	\$1,922,000	\$1,537,600	\$384,400	state	2009	Montachusett	3
STP	Leominster	601992	Rte 12 / Willard St - signals	\$910,000	\$728,000	\$182,000	state	2009	Montachusett	3
Bridge-On	Leominster	603514	Whitney St / Monoosnoc River - (L-8-14) - replacement	\$624,400	\$499,520	\$124,880	state	2010	Montachusett	3
CMAQ	Leominster	602340	Nashua Trail @ Searstown	\$380,448	\$304,358	\$76,090	state	2011	Montachusett	3

Table A3: Leominster Transit projects included on the FFY 2008-2011 STIP

Funding	Category	Project	Total	Federal	NFA	NFA Source	FFY	MPO	RTA
5309	bus	Parking facility - North Leominster	\$3,750,000	\$3,000,000	\$750,000	state	2009	Montachusett	MART
5309	bus	Parking facility - N Leominster	\$5,625,000	\$4,500,000	\$1,125,000	state	2009	Montachusett	MART
5309	bus	N Main St /Leominster rehabilitation	\$2,000,000	\$1,600,000	\$400,000	state	2009	Montachusett	MART
5309	bus	N Leominster parking garage	\$3,750,000	\$3,000,000	\$750,000	state	2010	Montachusett	MART



the point where it can be listed on the STIP in time for eligibility for the second round of funding. If it determined to be both feasible and a justifiable effort, taking into account the anticipated regional prioritization of the work relative to other STIP projects, the DPW may consider advancing one or more of the conceptual recommendations for the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood to reach this design milestone by next March.

2. Allocation of Local Funding

The availability of funding for infrastructure improvements within the Leominster budget process is limited due in part to the increasing financial challenges facing municipalities. It is known that spending on public works by cities and towns in Massachusetts declined steadily from 1987-2004.¹²

Two sources of dedicated funding from the State and Federal government are available for potential use for public infrastructure improvements: Ch. 90 funds from MassHighway and CDBG funds from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and administered by the State DHCD.

Ch. 90 funds are reimbursement funds awarded to a municipality to defray expenses resulting from repairs to local roads, based on a formula taking into account the total mileage of public roadways in a municipality. According to MHD, Leominster maintains 151.36 total miles of public roads.

In FY10, Leominster received \$842,872 in Ch. 90 funds, an amount that was substantially identical to amounts received in FY09 and FY08. This funding level reflects an increase from the early 2000s during which Ch. 90 funding levels statewide were significantly less than those approved in the 1990s.¹³ According to the Leominster DPW, the FY10 Ch. 90 funds have been earmarked for paving and traffic signal improvements in downtown Leominster, Mill Street and Crawford Street. The allocation of future Ch. 90 allocations will take place based on availability of funds and prioritization of local needs.

Activities eligible for funding pursuant to CDBG include but are not limited to the construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation (including removal of architectural barriers to accessibility) or installation of public facilities and improvements, including street, sidewalks, curbs, parks etc. provided that such public improvements advance a national objective for use of CDBG.¹⁴ The high proportion of low- or moderate-income households in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood suggests that CDBG would be an eligible funding source. However, it is important to note that any such expenditures on public improvements are subject to compliance with applicable regulation including the Davis-Bacon Wage Rate Act.

It is notable that CDBG funds may also be used to pay special assessments on behalf of low- and moderate-income property owners in the event that such owners are subject to an assessment or betterment fee to finance new public improvements. This could be used to mitigate the impact of such an assessment for those property owners least able to afford such a surcharge.

Historically, the majority of CDBG funding awarded to Leominster has been used to provide a range of social services for low and moderate income populations, although allocation of funding for sidewalk improvements is not unprecedented. In FY07, approximately \$21,000 of CDBG funding was invested in sidewalks on Mill Street. Resulting from the Federal Stimulus package approved by the U.S. Congress earlier this year, Leominster received a supplemental appropriation of \$137,704 ("CDBG-R" funding) which was used for the Whitney Street water main. However, additional CDBG-R funding is not anticipated.

12 MMA/CURP. "Revenue sharing and the Future of the Massachusetts economy," January 2006.

13 Massachusetts Infrastructure Investment Coalition. "Infrastructure Status Report: Massachusetts Roadways." April 2006.

14 MMA/CURP. "Revenue sharing and the Future of the Massachusetts economy," January 2006.



Some municipalities have looked to the sale of surplus municipal land as a potential revenue source to fund infrastructure improvements, and this strategy can also have the effect of stimulating new private investment on the former public land. A review of the limited public land in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, however, does not suggest an opportunity for this approach in Leominster. All of the non-ROW City-owned parcels in the neighborhood are in use for recreational or open space purposes and are not suitable for disposition for redevelopment. The scope of this report did not include review of public land elsewhere in the City that may have potential for sale or reuse.

3. Spending Supported by Fees/Contributions from Users/Beneficiaries

Given the limitations on existing funding to finance public improvements in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, it is reasonable to examine whether one or more new sources of funding may be appropriate. This section examines three potential sources of funding supported by fees or contributions from the users or beneficiaries of the resulting funds that are authorized in Massachusetts.

Betterments and Special Assessments

Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 83 Sec. 25 provides the City Council with the authority to establish sidewalks in public ways or order the reconstruction of existing sidewalks “if in their judgment the public convenience so requires.”¹⁵ The Council may impose an assessment on abutting property owners for an amount not to exceed one-half the total cost of such improvements, and may by ordinance limit the amount of such assessment to one percent of the total assessed value of the property.

Historically, betterments have only been used in Leominster to fund sewer work, and have not been used for new or improved sidewalks. However, the existence of specific enabling legislation for this purpose suggests that its use should be considered among other financing options. Such an assessment would require City Council adoption of a formal order describing the proposed improvements, the area benefited by such improvements and a statement of the betterments or special assessments to be levied to pay for the improvements.

The opinions of those who would bear the cost of such a public policy should be central to its consideration. Prior to initiating any formal consideration of this policy, a survey of residents in the affected neighborhoods would be beneficial, and should be coded such that the level of support for such a surcharge could be gauged on a block by block basis. The survey should also test the elasticity of response by determining the level of support for a fee at various cost increments. Depending on the outcome of such a survey, the City Council would have better information on which to base a decision of whether to pursue such assessments in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood or a subset of the neighborhood, and at what cost level.

As noted in the prior section, CDBG funds may also be used to pay special assessments on behalf of low- and moderate-income property owners in the event that such owners are subject to an assessment or betterment fee to finance new public improvements. This approach could be used to mitigate the impact of such an assessment for those property owners least able to afford such a surcharge.

Business Improvement Districts

Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 40O authorizes establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) in order to plan and carry out a wide range of services and/or capital improvements including, but limited to, designing, engineering, constructing, maintaining, or operating urban streetscapes or infrastructures to further economic development and public purposes.¹⁶ A BID is a special district that is financed by a supplemental property tax of 0.5% of the assessed

¹⁵ Massachusetts Infrastructure Investment Coalition. “Infrastructure Status Report: Massachusetts Roadways.” April 2006.



valuation of property within the BID, subject to an owners' option to exclude their property from the BID (and surcharge) upon its adoption. A BID must include an area which is at least three-fourths zoned or used for commercial, industrial, retail or mixed uses. In order to create a BID, a petition must be endorsed by at least 51% of the assessed valuation of all real property within the District and 60% of the property owners.

The Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood as a whole is primarily residential in nature and therefore not eligible for creation of a BID. Pursuing a BID within a subset of the neighborhood in order to meet the required 75% non-residential use or zone is not recommended as a productive strategy to advance the neighborhood's infrastructure planning. As a practical matter, it is not clear that BIDs provide a sound strategy for infrastructure financing. BIDs have no detailed financing mechanism to issue bonds or secure them, and no bonds have ever been issued by a BID. BIDs are typically used for economic development activities such as marketing and provision of supplemental public services such as public safety and sanitation. Only two BIDs are operational in Massachusetts, in Hyannis and Springfield.

Gift Accounts

Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 44 Sec. 53A authorizes the creation of Gift Accounts for the purpose of receiving grants or gifts of funds from various sources, and authorizes the use of such funds for the stated purpose accompanying the gift without further appropriation. Once established, such an account can provide a transparent financing mechanism for needed public improvements such as sidewalks and walking paths.

Establishing a gift account and securing funds to deposit into the account are two separate challenges. However, establishing an account in order to provide a mechanism to hold and manage contributions may be a worthwhile step to take in order to provide a foundation for future fundraising efforts. Potential sources of contributions to such an account include solicitation of private donations from landowners, businesses, and developers interested in volunteering public improvements as a way to strengthen the neighborhood.

In the past, residents have partnered with Leominster DPW from time to time to assist in the construction of new sidewalks. In some instances, residents have purchased the required materials while local public works employees have installed new sidewalks. The Leominster DPW would continue to entertain such proposals.

Some municipalities have offered relief from the requirement to allow the construction of sidewalks on one side of a new street (rather than both sides) to developers of residential subdivisions, in some cases to be offset by contribution of funds to a sidewalk gift account. However, our review of the Leominster subdivision regulations suggest that the existing requirements for sidewalks are appropriately tiered based on street classification, traffic volumes etc, and therefore a reduction in the sidewalk requirements would not be beneficial.

4. Debt Supported by Future Incremental Revenues in District

Neither the DIF nor I-Cubed programs are recommended in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. Both programs require substantial filings to comply with program requirements including exhaustive analysis of the economic impacts of anticipated developments and associated revenue projections. Our experience with both programs suggests that, in order to be effective and to justify the substantial effort necessary to enact them, either program must be driven by one or more major programmed development to which one or more developers will commit, and that can be expected to produce significant new public revenues. In the absence of any such proposal in the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood, or available land to support a proposal of adequate scale to meet these thresholds, Concord Square does not recommend pursuit of either program at this time.

16 <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/library/stateguide/ch2.pdf> and <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/library/stateguide/appd.pdf>



5. General Obligation Bonds

Due to the parameters for this project, Concord Square did not closely examine the City's bonding capacity. However, our analysis suggests that the City may enjoy sufficient benefit in the form of increased property valuations and tax yield to justify a bond issuance to advance the infrastructure recommendations included herein. In the event that the City elects to pursue additional borrowing, we anticipate that the Comb & Carriage/French Hill recommendations would be considered in the context of other potential capital improvements in Leominster, and would be evaluated and prioritized based on the City's resources and policy priorities.



APPENDIX B

Gateway Participants

The following Leominster stakeholders participated directly in the creation of this Gateway Plus Revitalization Plan. The City and the consultants wish to express appreciation for the time, thoughts and interest these individuals volunteered to help improve the Comb & Carriage/French Hill Neighborhood.

City Officials

The Honorable Dean J. Mazzarella, Mayor
Liz Irvine, Mayors Office
Wayne Nickel, 182 Fifth Street, Ward 1 Councilor
Claire Freda, 117 Debbie Dr., Ward 3 Councilor
James Lanciani Jr., 156 Sylvan Avenue, Councilor at Large
Kate Griffin-Brooks, Director, Office of Planning & Development
Andy Taylor, Assistant Director, Office of Planning & Development
Roger Brooks, Department of Public Works
Sgt Andrew Dupuis, Leominster Police Department
Ryan Malatos, Leominster Police Department

Businesses, Religious Institutions & Non-Profits

Maritza Cedeno, Catholic Charities
Nicholas Formaggia, Spanish American Center
John Going, Catholic Charities
Mickey Guzman, Spanish American Center
Arthur Huessen, Montachusett Interfaith Network
Neddy Latimer, Spanish American Center
Emily MacRae, President, Board of Directors, Twin Cities CDC
Reverend Angel & Joan Morales, Casa de Restauracion
Jim Whitney, Developer, 40 Spruce Street
Jackie Hagger, Catholic Charities
Ginny White, Ginny's Thrift Shop

Neighborhood Residents and Parishioners

Ray Allard, 278 Water Street
Claire Babineau, 240 Mechanic Street
Raziz Bhatti, no address
Elena & Roberto Batista, 17 Martin Street
Leslie Berrios, no address
Aurley Bible, 178 5th Street
Jose Bono, 155 Mechanic Street
Roger Brooks 50 Carter Street
Emile Brosseau, 21 Bishop Street
Ernest Charpentier, 152 Sixth Street
Mary Ann Cormier, 264 West Street
Pauline Cormier, no address
Anes Crespo, 97 Water Street



Oscar DeSosa, 15 Monoosnock Street
Yomar Diaz, 1130 Water St., Fitchburg
James Grey, 121 Eighth Street
Faith Horan, 188 4th Street
Wendy Koski, 220 Mechanic Street
JD LeBlanc, 182 Spruce Street
Cheryl L'Homme 21 First Street
Dennis Loiselle, 26 Fourth Street
Phyllis and Leandre Maillet, no address
Eyleen Matias, 17 Martin Street
Viviana Maldonado, 1130 Water Street, Fitchburg
Tony Mazzaferro, Westminster
Lec Martinez, 9D Crossman Avenue
Pedro Munoz, 247 Mechanic Street
Hilda Perez, 46 Laurel Street
Marcie Ramos, 150 Viscoloid Street
Hilda Rivera, 60 Arlington Street, Fitchburg
Andy & Magali Roldan, 29 Third Street
Rosario Rosado, 45 Laurel Street
Paul Ruis, no address
Lawrence Smart, 171 Water Street
Luis & Marla Soto, 176 Manca Drive, Gardner, MA
Ronald Theriault, 694 Union Street
Gina Tocci, 334 Hill Street
Alexander Veli 112 Spruce Street
Ken & Joy Wheeler, 24 Oak Avenue

Consultants

Ted Carmen, President, Concord Square Planning & Development, Inc. (CSP&D), Boston, MA
Karen Cullen, AICP, Senior Planner, CSP&D, Palmer, MA
John Ryan, Development Cycles, Amherst, MA
Marc Dohan, President, Twin Cities CDC, Fitchburg, MA
David Thibault-Muñoz, Community Organization Director, TCCDC, Fitchburg, MA
Steve Cook, Housing Development Director, TCCDC, Fitchburg, MA
Laurel Miller, TCCDC Homebuyers Education Director, TCCDC, Fitchburg, MA



APPENDIX C

Outreach Samples

PRESS RELEASE:

Neighborhood Planning Meeting for the Comb & Carriage/ French Hill Neighborhood

The City of Leominster warmly invites the public to attend an important Neighborhood Planning Meeting for the Comb & Carriage/ French Hill neighborhood on Wednesday April 29th from 5:45- 8:00 PM at the House of Restoration Church (Casa de Restauracion), 134 Spruce Street, Leominster MA.

This meeting provides an opportunity for neighborhood residents, businesses and landlords to have their voices heard on specific actions needed to:

- ❖ Address problems caused by housing foreclosure, blight and abandonment in the neighborhood,
- ❖ Identify improvements needed to water, sewer, drainage, parking and sidewalk infrastructure
- ❖ Balance jobs-housing strategies to ensure there is a match between available jobs, workforce skills and the cost of housing
- ❖ Enhance current walking and biking opportunities and to develop the Monoosnoc Brook corridor as a greenway running through the entire neighborhood.

This meeting is part of a \$75,000 Gateway Plus Action Grant received by the City of Leominster from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The grant provided the funding for consultants, Concord Square Planning & Development of Boston and Development Cycles of Amherst, MA to help neighborhood residents prepare a specific action plan to revitalize the Comb & Carriage/ French Hill neighborhood.

According to Mayor Dean Mazzarella, “this process had come to our city at the most opportune time and we will all benefit from a fresh look at one of our most important neighborhoods.”

Ted Carman, President and Karen M. Cullen, Senior Planner for Concord Square, “are looking forward to meeting members of the community and listening to their ideas of what the challenges in the neighborhood are, and any ideas they may have about how to address those challenges.”

John Ryan, Principal of Development Cycles in Amherst, MA will facilitate the Neighborhood Planning Meeting on April 29th. He has been working with the Twin Cities CDC and with the Spanish American Center, the East Side Neighborhood Association, the Montachusett Interfaith Network, Catholic Charities, Casa de Restauracion, Saint Cecilia’s Church, and local businesses to mobilize residents to participate in the effort.

For more information about the meeting on April 29th, the public may contact David Thibault Munoz at Twin Cities CDC (978) 342-9561 x20.



A FREE LIGHT DINNER, REFRESHMENTS, TRANSLATION AND CHILDCARE WILL BE PROVIDED

ATTENTION

Comb and Carriage/French Hill-Area Residents, Businesses, and Landlords

The City of Leominster Cordially Invites you to attend:

Neighborhood Planning Meeting

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29TH

5:45-8PM

**House of Restoration Church
134 Spruce Street**



For More Information Contact: David Thibault Muñoz (978) 342 9561 ext. 20

Do you think that you should have a say in deciding what happens in this community?



Atención
Residentes, Negocios, y Propietarios
del Área de Comb & Carriage/French Hill
La CIUDAD DE LEOMINSTER Cordialmente le invita:

Reunión de Planificación
el MIERCOLES 29 de ABRIL
de 5:45-8PM
Casa de Restauración
134 Spruce Street

SE PROVEERÁ UNA CENA LIGERA GRATIS Y REFRESCOS Y TRADUCCIÓN Y CUIDO DE NIÑOS

¿Osted cree que su opinión debería contar con respecto a las decisiones sobre lo que pasa en su comunidad?

Para mas información comuníquese con: David Thibault-Munoz (978)-342-9561 ext. 20

Spanish Language Announcement, April 29th Community Meeting



Atenção
Residentes, Proprietários e Empresas de
Comb and Carriage/French Hill-Area

Reunião de planificação da
vizinhança

Quarta Feira, 29 de Abril
17.45 – 20.00

House of Restoration Church



Para mais informação, contactar: David Thibault-Muñoz (978)-347-9561 ext. 20

Portuguese Language Announcement, April 29th Community Meeting



ATTENTION

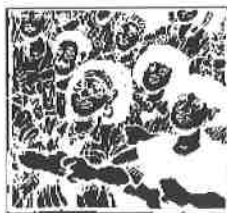
Résidents, Propriétaires, et Entreprises des quartiers Comb et Carriage/French Hill

La Ville de Leominster vous invite à une:

**Concertation sur l'aménagement
du quartier**

**Mercredi 29 avril
17h45-20h00**

House of Restoration Church



Renseignements: David Thibault-Muñoz (978)-342-9561 ext. 20

French Language Announcement, April 29th Community Meeting



Last Chance Opportunity for Input

Comb & Carriage/French Hill
Residents, Businesses, and Landlords

The City of Leominster
Invites You to
Help Review Recommendations
and Set Priorities on the

Gateway Plus
Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
at a **Final Meeting** on
Wednesday, August 19th
6:30 PM at 40 Spruce Street



For More Information call David Thibault-Muñoz (978)-342-9561 ext. 120
Food and childcare will be provided

English Language Announcement, August 19th Community Meeting



Última oportunidad para contribución**Comb & Carriage/French Hill**

Residentes, las empresas, y propietarios

La ciudad de Leominster te invita a
Ayudar y examinar Recomendaciones
y establecer prioridades sobre la
Gateway Plus

**Plan de Revitalización del Vecindario
en una reunión final
el Miércoles, 19 de Agosto a las
6:30 PM en 40 Spruce Street**



Para más información llame a David Thibault-Muñoz (978) -342-9561 ext. 120
Alimentación y cuidado de los niños serán proporcionados

Spanish Language Announcement, August 19th Community Meeting



APPENDIX D

Notes from Community Meetings

April 29th Neighborhood Meeting

The following is the list of issues brought up at the neighborhood meeting held at 6:00 pm on April 29, 2009 at the House of Restoration Church on Spruce Street, as recorded by Karen Cullen of Concord Square Planning & Development:

Housing:

- ❖ absentee landlords who allow buildings to deteriorate; don't care about their properties
- ❖ a lot of owner occupied buildings have become entirely rental
- ❖ need more owner occupants
- ❖ the City should allow infill of new (owner occupied) single and two family homes on lots that are undersized per the Zoning Ordinance, including lots where apartment buildings are demolished
- ❖ how can the City identify problem properties?
- ❖ look at what is needed to better serve the rental properties and tenants – ideas included:
 - ◆ multi-lingual emergency contact sheets for all rental units
 - ◆ contact information for landlords posted at each property
 - ◆ establishing better communication between the neighborhood and the City Health Department and Building department (code officers)
 - ◆ look into re-establishing the Distressed Properties Committee and have them focus on one small area at a time
- ❖ currently there are a lot of vacant properties for rent and property owners are having a hard time renting them
- ❖ rents are too high for many people – incomes have not risen, while rents have
- ❖ people will rent places that are nice, fixed up, etc.
- ❖ the current economic conditions are affecting property sales, etc.
- ❖ is there any federal funding available to help homeowners to improve properties?
- ❖ a single bad property on a street affects the whole street (neighborhood)



Infrastructure:

- ❖ is there any funding to construct new sidewalks, to continue existing ones? Noted Twelfth Street needed a sidewalk.
- ❖ the City collects a fee for parking on the street – can they use that money to improve the sidewalks and repair the streets?
- ❖ Streets noted as problems included Whitney, Water, Mill, and Mechanic (west end)
- ❖ the old (timer operated) traffic light at Whitney & Water disrupts traffic flow and should be replaced by a new (sensor operated) light. Speaker noted the street underneath is cobblestone, so this will require complete reconstruction of the intersection.
- ❖ the width of many sidewalks is too narrow, so people end up walking in the street. Fourth Street was noted as a problem.
- ❖ cars park on the sidewalks since there are no curbs to prevent it; they want to get off the street as far as they can, so they park on the grass and sometimes the sidewalk
- ❖ in many places cars park on the grass between the street and sidewalk so much that the grass is long gone and it's just dirt (or mud)
- ❖ curbs would address those problems
- ❖ Monoosnoc Brook Greenway:
 - ◆ good idea to make this a walking trail and to add a pedestrian bridge
 - ◆ trail needs to be improved to allow elderly residents to enjoy it too
 - ◆ however, this is a lower priority than the other needs in the neighborhood, including sidewalks throughout the neighborhood (repair and construction of new ones)
 - ◆ a bridge would be good, but expensive – but okay to pursue it if there is funding that can be obtained that cannot be used for anything else in the neighborhood

Community:

- ❖ the cultural barrier needs to be broken down [this was presented more as an observation that the neighborhood will continuously go through transitions in residents and their cultures, and everyone needs to recognize and appreciate the cultural differences and get along with each other –Ed]
- ❖ why not do a “Buy Leominster Now” program? (marketing and incentives program to attract and retain residents)
- ❖ use some of the vacant lots for community gardens
- ❖ drug use in the public parks is a problem; unsafe to bring young children there especially after dark – need to address this problem with public education aimed at the kids using the drugs
 - ◆ need program funding to provide viable alternatives to drug activity (sports, etc.)



- ♦ private funding such as sponsorships for uniforms, equipment, etc. can be from local businesses as well as others, helps build community
 - ♦ investment of public dollars in such programs pays back in dividends for years to come
 - ♦ need to establish community based institutions and programs
 - ♦ Police Department considered closing the park from dusk to dawn, but many people get home from work late and want to be able to use the park too
 - ♦ suggestion that residents who encounter problems at the park should call the police; police officer noted frustration with new law regarding marijuana but general discussion noted the problems will move elsewhere if police frequently respond to the same place
- ❖ things in the neighborhood have improved a lot over the last decade
- ♦ many problem buildings have been demolished
 - ♦ significant involvement by the police department has helped a lot
 - ♦ more foot traffic and vehicular traffic now than a few years ago, people are no longer afraid to walk or drive through the neighborhood
- ❖ the neighborhood will continue to improve, especially as more properties are cleaned up, building exteriors are improved, properties are landscaped, and kept maintained

Hartman Building:

- ❖ conversion to housing will create more competition for tenants, at least with the current economic downturn
- ❖ the City should require the current owner to clean up the property so it isn't the eyesore it is now
- ❖ conversion of the building will improve it, which will improve the neighborhood, which will improve the marketability of the neighborhood in general
- ❖ private developers cannot afford to tackle this building, since it is historic and there are a lot of codes to comply with; it is very expensive and not cost effective without an organization like the CDC with funding sources not available to for-profit developers
- ❖ need to balance the benefit of cleaning up the Hartman building with the increase in traffic, increase in housing units, increase in taxes for schools and other services, etc.



June 13th Neighborhood Meeting

The following is a summary of comments from the neighborhood meeting held at 10:00 am on June 13, 2009 at the Spanish American Center on Spruce Street.

Housing

- ❖ Strong agreement with focus on addressing blighted properties
- ❖ General agreement on appropriateness of properties chosen
- ❖ General approval of Hartman development moving forward through permitting
- ❖ Continued questions about access to financing for private residents to address fix up issues

Infrastructure:

- ❖ Strong agreement with the focus on sidewalk and road improvements
- ❖ Concerns raised about adequacy of parking on certain streets if curbed sidewalks were added
- ❖ Concerns raised about limiting parking, especially near areas of local convenience retailers
- ❖ Need to follow up with DPW to address range of unintended consequences that could arise from implementing recommended sidewalk actions
- ❖ Monoosnoc Brook Greenway: as before, there was agreement that the idea was good but the priority was low in terms of using public dollars. Residents raised concerns about bridge costs, accessibility and bank erosion issues
- ❖ Pedestrian Access to Downtown: Recommended improvement attractive but have limited value. This is not a walking neighborhood but a driving one. Downtown is not focus, rather the Mall at Whitney Field. Focus pedestrian improvements in that direction.

Community:

- ❖ The efforts to develop the Monoosnoc Brook Greenway during a period of severe public constraints provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to get involved and do this as a community building effort. Key is to give opportunities for individuals to get recognition for the work they helped create right where it happens. This will give individuals a much greater stake in maintaining the improvements after they are done.



August 19th Neighborhood Meeting

The following is a summary of comments from the neighborhood meeting held at 6:30 pm on August 19th, 2009 at the Whitney Center, 40 Spruce Street where Concord Square Planning & Development presented the Findings and Recommendations of the study.

Infrastructure:

- ❖ A question was raised about code requirements involved in repairing the concrete stairs that access the Monoosnoc Brook Greenway at Sixth Street.
- ❖ A participant asked about youth programs; while youth programs per se were not the focus of this study, there are two activities that could be beneficial to the neighborhood youth: as the City or others acquire derelict properties, one consideration should be whether it is more sensible to demolish the structure and replace it with either a park, basketball court, or parking lot, and the second activity is that the Monoosnoc Brook Greenway will provide another recreational opportunity for the youth. Groups such as scouts, church youth groups, etc. can help keep the greenway clean and safe by doing service projects from time to time, and the City could consider allowing limited use of the area for “mini day camps” where simple facilities such as picnic tables could enable City run or other programs where children would have access to the environmental educational benefits that the area has to offer.
- ❖ John Ryan of Development Cycles offered that community and volunteer efforts would go a long way to making the Monoosnoc Brook Greenway a reality and a pleasant place to go.
- ❖ A participant involved with the efforts of the Minority Coalition expressed a desire that the report reference public transportation, especially to the hospital, and some covered bus stops in the neighborhood as being important to young and chronically ill residents. Kate Griffin-Brooks, Director of the Office of Planning & Development, requested that the participant get in touch with her to discuss in greater detail the best locations for bus shelters.

Housing:

- ❖ The Minister of Casa de Restauracion expressed interest in making sure that the report identified the owners of seriously distressed properties and provide some direction for how might they might acquire one of these properties as a location for a more suitable home for their church in the neighborhood.

Next Steps:

- ❖ Casa de Restauracion expressed an interest in contributing in any way they could to helping this neighborhood.
- ❖ Kate Griffin-Brooks and Councilor Wayne Nickel both encouraged residents to come to City Hall to study the posters, which will be on display outside the Planning Office, and to talk to Kate or Councilor Nichols about the neighborhood and their particular concerns – a particular property, a section of sidewalk, etc. She also said the report will be in her office for anyone who wishes to review it or read it.
- ❖ Karen Cullen of Concord Square also mentioned the report will be available on the internet through the City’s web site, and copies will be available for the key organizations in the neighborhood as well as at City Hall and at the public library.



- ❖ Councilor Nichols encouraged the residents to participate in the CDBG funding priority process which begins in January every year by filling out forms for specific projects in the neighborhood to be done next year and attending the public hearing to express strong support for actions in this neighborhood. The City does consider the amount of support any individual project up for consideration gets, in addition to the degree of need for the project, in making their decisions on what projects will get funded through the CDBG program. [It should be noted, however, that much of the CDBG funding in Leominster is earmarked for social service programs. – Ed.]
- ❖ The TCCDC accepted responsibility for scheduling and organizing a first “implementation” meeting within the neighborhood in the Fall, after residents have had a chance to digest the report. The CDC Will invite the East Side Neighborhood Association, the Spanish American Center, and Casa de Restauracion, as well as city officials, and others to attend.
- ❖ John Ryan closed by saying that while City Hall will have much of the responsibility to making these things happen, it is up to the residents to provide the energy to get them going and make them happen. He suggested the East End Neighborhood Association should play a more active role, and the Spanish American Center needs to think about how they relate to the overall plan. The Casa de Restauracion has already expressed great interest and plans to continue pursuing activities that will help the neighborhood, and the Twin Cities CDC has, through their redevelopment plans for the building at 142 Water Street, shown great interest in helping Leominster with their revitalization efforts. He thanked all participants for their valuable input throughout the process.



APPENDIX E

Summary Of Individual Interviews

The following summarizes 15 individual interviews held by the consultants as part of the Leominster Gateway Plus outreach. For each of these interviews, the basic questions were the same: 1) what are the most important issues in the neighborhood; 2) what positive actions do you think will have the greatest benefit; and 3) what suggestions do you have for ensuring broad community participation for this effort.

1. The Honorable Mayor Dean J. Mazzarella, Mayor (Feb 12, Mar 10): A native of this neighborhood, Mayor Mazzarella led a tour of the neighborhood for the consultants at the outset of the effort. His focus included improving the neighborhood's walkability; providing connections to the Mall at Whitney Field; supporting local shopkeepers; bring jobs into the neighborhood through greater utilization of several recently improved commercial properties; and addressing the worst of the blighted properties, including the Hartman Moving & Storage Building on Water Street.

2. Wayne Nickel, City Council President (several occasions): Nickel was involved with every public meeting and provided helpful background on the entire range of issues from abandoned and foreclosed properties, to sidewalk, roadwork and parking improvement efforts; to the proposed Monoosnoc Brook greenway plan. He was particularly helpful in thinking through unintended consequences and political and practical considerations with specific recommendations of the plan.

3. James Lanciani Jr., City Council Vice President (April 29, August 19): Lanciani has a particular interest in getting MOC weatherization money to help as many property owners as possible in the neighborhood. Recognizing the limitations of municipal financing right now, the planning effort may best be seen as setting the groundwork for improvements that may take awhile to get funded.

4. Claire Freda, Ward 3 Councilor (June 13): As a property appraiser, Freda is concerned with the changes in the way residential properties in this neighborhood are being appraised and how this might impact financing availability. She is supportive of the range of plans aimed at improving property values in the neighborhood but recognizes the current limitations of local and state support.

5. Kate Griffin-Brooks, Director of Planning & Development (Jan 20): Griffin-Brooks hopes this Gateway Planning process will build from the previous revitalization work the City sponsored in 2006 for the Comb & Carriage/French Hill neighborhood. She provided background information and contact people involved in this previous effort. She correctly predicted that streetscape, sidewalk, and parking improvements, along with addressing dilapidated or foreclosed properties would be the focus of neighborhood concern. She is a strong supporter of renovating the Hartman Moving & Storage facility at 142 Water Street for needed affordable rental housing in this neighborhood.

6. Andy Taylor, Assistant Director of Planning & Development (Jan 20): Taylor focused on the efforts to upgrade the neighborhoods nearest the downtown in order to build up more downtown foot traffic and commercial spending. He was particularly focused on the key gateway streets including Mechanic and Water Streets as key to changing the wider community impression of the Comb & Carriage neighborhood and downtown generally.

7. Neddy Latimer, Mickey Guzman & Nicholas Formaggio, Spanish American Center (several occasions): Latimer and Guzman, who were both deeply involved in the CDC's work in the neighborhood during the 1990s, brought up both the challenges and celebrations regarding past and future community-building



activities. They spoke of the tensions between Latino residents and white residents associated with relations to the EENA. They really enjoyed the block parties and neighborhood-wide activities that they took part in then and would like to see that happen again in the future. The Spanish American Center wants help to expand programs for youth in the neighborhood. They would like to see more activities for teens and run a childcare program to help parents (many of whom are from the immediate neighborhood) get involved with their programs. Latimer has also talked about the need for transitional housing for residents in need of housing and has expressed a desire to have the SAC acquire and rehabilitate a blighted property adjoining the SAC. One of the Spanish American Center's main issues surrounds the need for more space; they've got an upstairs that is underutilized and would need to be brought up to code to be useful; they also expressed interests in the extra space at the Hartman building as a possibility for expanding their programs and pointed to a foreclosed property on first street that abuts their building for the same purpose. Nicolas has stepped up his role as a neighborhood leader and has turned out residents to meetings and events. He is our "Resident Team Coordinator", charged with mobilizing and developing a core team of leaders who will attend a NeighborWorks Community Leadership Institute in October and develop a strategy on how to work together to improve the neighborhood for area residents. Formaggia's focus is on improving access to housing for homeless families and expanding access to youth programming in the area.

8. Reverend Angel & Joan Morales, Casa de Restauracion (several occasions): This group has also expressed the need to expand opportunities for both a access to more programs for neighborhood youth and access to housing for homeless families – two issues continuously brought up by their members and by friends and family of members. One of their members, Lee Martinez, wants help organizing neighborhood-based sports league(s), like baseball or basketball. There has also been conversation about creating more parks and a basketball court in particular, in the neighborhood – perhaps on lots where dilapidated buildings currently stand. Four persons from the church, including Lee, Angel and Joan will be attending the October Community Leadership Institute.

9. Arthur Huessen, Interfaith Hospitality Network (Mar 10): IHF's interests focus on creating transitional housing for people who end up in area shelters. Their goal is to develop a successful program to help people move from the shelter, get on their feet economically, and move in to their own apartments. This is something that Huessen feels is lacking in the tri-city area. Interfaith Hospitality Network recently moved in to Leominster, from Fitchburg. They left Fitchburg because he says they found little support for their work from the City of Fitchburg, especially when compared to the support they have gotten from Leominster officials. They are looking to acquire a building of their own.

10. JD LeBlanc, East Side Neighborhood Association (several occasions): LeBlanc helped out with the NeighborWorks event, both in the planning and at the event itself. He owns two properties, a three unit on Spruce and a ten unit on Fourth Streets, and would like to see improvements in parking and neighborhood walkability, while preserving existing trees – including those growing through the sidewalks and on properties with buildings that might get torn down. He expressed the view that City should not spend money on the brook walkway, when it could be spent on improving streets and sidewalks that are more likely to be used.

11. Claire Babineau, East Side Neighborhood Association (Apr 29): Babineau was supportive of any efforts to improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood. She was particularly focused on addressing some of the blighted properties that bring down the value of all property owners. She also wanted to see efforts to support private landlords dealing with declining market demand. As such, she was not supportive of a subsidized rental development at the Hartman building, and hoped it could be demolished or used for commercial purposes instead.

12. Ginny White, Ginny's Thrift Shop (Mar 10): White is a dedicated advocate for the poor and supports ideas surrounding improving access to and expanding opportunities for housing and shelter. She was involved with the CDC's work in the neighborhood in the 1990s. She does not wish to be involved again and found it frustrating



that the CDC and City built up a lot of hope for folks in the area and didn't follow through. Her comments echoed similar sentiments expressed by the Spanish American Center and the East Side Neighborhood Association.

13. Jackie Hagger, John Going and Maritza Ceden, Catholic Charities (several occasions): John Going helped plan the NeighborWorks event and wants to do community-building type activities; Going and Hagger were both involved in the 1990s when the CDC was doing work in the area; support the ideas around fixing up sidewalks and creating more area rental housing.

14. Jim Whitney Developer (several occasions): Whitney focused on the importance of cleaning up the Hartman Building, because it is the gateway to the neighborhood. He also has a desire to see the Monoosnoc Brook improved. What is most important is to help all of the neighborhood, including the residents, shopkeepers and commercial interests.

15. Sgt Andrew Dupuis, Leominster Police Department (Apr 29): Dupuis reiterated the department's willingness to help and focus on improving relationships in this neighborhood. Much improvement in the last several years. Safety, drugs, prostitution, crime generally are way down following the department's real focus in this neighborhood. Providing safe play opportunities for youth and keeping the few neighborhood parks free of drug use and disruptive behaviors are of particular interest.



